



House Committee on Judiciary
Testimony in Support of HB 4005

Chair Sanchez, Vice Chairs Bynum and Sprenger and members of the Committee.

My name is Trish Garner and I am the State Public Policy Chair of the American Association of University Women of Oregon. AAUW has been empowering women since 1881 by advancing equity through advocacy, education, and research.

Firearms violence represents a public health crisis. The example I cite here is but one small piece of this crisis.

Recent research published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine has demonstrated that many U.S. adults 65 and older who died of suicide between 2003 and 2016 did not have a known mental illness. Suicide risk increases with age and evidence exists for the underdiagnosis and undertreatment of suicide risk in older adults.

It is also the case that most suicide deaths involved firearms, which were disproportionately used by decedents without known mental illness (81.6% of men and 44.6% of women) compared with those with known mental illness (70.5% of men and 30.0% of women).¹

How does this relate to safe storage of firearms? Firstly, it demonstrates yet another and largely unknown aspect of the dangers posed by firearms. Secondly, ready access to firearms increases the possibility that older adults who are unaware of their mental illness or its warning signs will be able to easily reach for and use firearms to end their lives. Neither they or their families, nor even their health care providers, may be aware of these dangers and the need to keep firearms safely stored.

AAUW of OR urges you to adopt HB 4005.

Thank you.

Trish Garner, State Public Policy Chair, AAUW of OR, garner37@mac.com

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/32001049>, Schutte and Wilkinson, *Suicide in Older Adults With and Without Known Mental Illness: Results from the National Violent Death Reporting System, 2003-2016*, Am J Prev Med, Jan 27 2020.

